



***Aboriginal news from across Turtle Island and beyond
September 2-6, 2013***

Two First Nations teens missing from Coquitlam

[Global News](#)

September 3, 2013

Amy Judd

Coquitlam RCMP are asking for the public's help in finding two First Nations teens.

17 year-old Leanne Point was last seen on August 28 at the Columbia SkyTrain station, possibly on her way to Surrey.

She is described as 5'3" tall, approximately 130lbs, with long brown hair and brown eyes.

Point was last seen wearing a black jacket, brown shirt, blue jeans, brown boots and carrying a brown purse.



Leanne Point

16 year-old Nikki Charles Thomas-Defresne was reported missing from his home on August 22.

He is described as 5'11" tall with an athletic build and short black hair.

Thomas-Defresne was last seen wearing a baseball cap, black coloured hoody, dark blue jeans and grey sneakers.

RCMP said a photo of Thomas-Defresne is not available at this time.

If you spot Nikki Charles Thomas-Defresne or Leanne Point, contact your local police immediately. Anyone with information about

either teen or their current whereabouts is asked to contact Coquitlam RCMP at 604-945-1550.

Books With No Bounds Boosts NAN Communities

[Net Newsledger](#)

2 September 2013

James Murray



Books With No Bounds is a blend of youthful enthusiasm backed with pure determination!

Youthful Enthusiasm and Determination Fuel Books With No Bounds

THUNDER BAY – Books with no Bounds is a project that gets books into the hands of young people across Northern Ontario.

The mission of [Books With No Bounds](#) is to provide Aboriginal children and teens living in remote communities, with books donated by publishers, authors, schools, individuals and organizations. Books With No Bounds organizes, catalogues, packs, and sends appropriate books to the Nishnawbe Aski Nations so that Aboriginal children and teens are given critical building blocks for literacy success.



Putting the Hope into Fort Hope

Every Child Deserves Opportunity

Books With No Bounds believes that every child deserves the opportunity to read and should have access to an enormous supply of books. By providing sorely needed reading material and other learning tools, Books With No Bounds refreshes the shelves of Aboriginal school libraries, community groups and organizations, and ensures children and teens have access to good books, regardless of where they live.

The two inspiring young ladies, Julia and Emma Mogus, who founded Books With No Bounds have shared, "Prime Minister Harper's Office sent us this letter after we mailed hundreds and hundreds of letters, signatures and a huge banner in support of First Nation children; so that they may grow up safely at home, get a good education, be healthy and be proud of their cultures.

"Our hope is to see our brothers and sisters in the north be given the same funding for education, access to affordable healthy food and much more".

"My sister and I continue to give as much as we can so that First Nation children, living on the reserves of the Nishnawbe Aski Nation, will have good books and other learning tools for education success".

"We just paid our [Wasaya Airways](#) invoices for our last shipment and continue to box thousands of more books during our free time," the Mogus sisters share.

"We are preparing to build and revitalize school/ community libraries with the help of kind and generous people, schools and organizations. We are working to shed light on the inconceivable cost of healthy food in the 'fly-in' communities, the unimaginable high rates of suicide among Aboriginal youth, the impoverished 'third world' conditions First Nation families must endure... while sharing with the world the beauty of Aboriginal cultures, the kindness and generosity of First Nation people and the incredible courage and strength of all Aboriginal people in our country".

Julia and Emma Mogus state, "We believe in PEACE, fairness and equal rights to all ... and nothing less! "

Whose Water? A B.C. First Nation Perspective

[Huffington Post](#)

02 September 2013 20:38

Larry Commodore(Community Advisor, The WaterWealth Project)

As is so often the case here in B.C. when controversy arises concerning land and resources, many non-natives rally to the cry that it is "our" resources or "public land" that's at stake.

To some First Nations, this is met with puzzlement: how did my people's traditional land and resources become something that belongs to all British Columbians?

A case in point is the recent issue of Nestle's water extraction operation in Hope, B.C. Here, one of the largest corporations in the world is taking 260 million litres of water per year of aquifer groundwater without charge. It's certainly an issue to be concerned about.

However, the media narrative is grounded in the notion of water as a public resource. The Sto:lo Nation communities of Chawathil and Union Bar would like to know how their rights and title to this particular resource was taken from them.

After all, Canada is supposedly a democratic society based on the rule of law. The highest law of the land, the Canadian constitution, "recognizes and affirms" Aboriginal rights and title and finally there's also a B.C. treaty process, as dysfunctional as it might be. These things are supposed to mean something, not to be taken as token gestures to the reality of the usurpation of native sovereignty in this country.

And what has come with the usurpation of control over our traditional territories? Certainly not cleaner, healthier and more productive waterways. And certainly not inclusive, accountable and localized decision making that serves the common good.

Another case to consider is the antiquated B.C. Water Act -- enacted over a century ago in 1909 when natives were considered "irrelevant" in public policy -- when it was illegal for us to hire legal representation or to organize politically to defend our rights. Usurpation is not gentle.

The Water Act, thus, most obviously lacks First Nations consultation and accommodation, to which is now legally obligated. The Act is not effective legislation for the industrial realities of our day (i.e., Nestle).

But, in moving forward on these matters, we must be mindful that this province has demonstrated that it is unable to manage abundance. Just look at B.C.'s history of forestry, fisheries and mineral extraction and consider that there is a perception of abundance of fresh water in this province -- though there are some who do beg to differ.

And when we consider the Nestle issue, we must be mindful that it's not just the Swiss-based corporation that is extracting water but also Natural Glacier Waters (Neve, Canada Icefield), Polaris Water Company (Whistler Water), Aquaterra (Canadian Springs) to name a few.

Perhaps most egregious is the use of water in existing and proposed LNG operations; which involves fracking, a practice that could take multi-millions of litres out of the water cycle annually, injecting it with toxins.

We have occasion to talk about these matters, and that time is now. The current B.C. government has promised to update the 1909 legislation in what it's calling a "Water Sustainability Act."

There are many good reasons to move on with reconciliation of rights and responsibilities between First Nations on a federal and provincial level. With fresh water in particular, we can't afford to make a mistake. We must get to a better place with other natural resources in this province.

We must strive for a time where all of us who live here, those who call this place home, can truly say it is "our" water.

Future uncertain for committee studying violence against indigenous women

[Edmonton Journal](#)

September 2, 2013

Michael Woods



OTTAWA, ONT.: JULY 5, 2011 -- Participants of the Women's Worlds 2011 congress marched from the Convention Centre to Parliament Hill with the Native Women's Association of Canada and local activists to raise awareness about the high rates of violence against Aboriginal women and girls in Canada, July 5, 2011. The Women's Worlds 2011 congress has over 1900 delegates from over 90 countries in Ottawa, from July 3 to July 7. (David Kawai / Ottawa Citizen) ASSIGNMENT NO. 105110 For story by Ari Altstedter Photograph by: **Postmedia News/Files, Postmedia News**

OTTAWA — The future of a special committee studying violence against indigenous women is up in the air due to Prime Minister Stephen Harper's plans to prorogue Parliament.

The committee was established by a unanimous all-party vote in the House of Commons in February, with a mandate to hold hearings on the disproportionate number of missing and murdered aboriginal women and propose solutions to address the root causes of the problem.

Some saw its creation as a government compromise in the face of increasing calls for a national public inquiry into missing and murdered aboriginal women, calls which have gone unheeded.

When Harper prorogues Parliament, the committee will cease to exist. But it could be reconstituted in the new legislative session with the agreement of the House.

However, the Conservative government won't say whether they will allow the committee, which met eight times before Parliament's summer break, to be reconstituted when Parliament returns in the fall.

"We will not speculate on the reconstitution of bills or committees," said Erica Meekes, a spokesperson for Aboriginal Affairs Minister Bernard Valcourt. An official in Chief Government Whip John Duncan's office echoed that comment.

More than 600 indigenous women have been murdered or gone missing in the last two decades, according to the Native Women's Association of Canada. Aboriginal women are seven times more likely to die a violent death than non-aboriginal women in Canada, according to Statistics Canada.

Opposition parties and aboriginal groups are calling for the chance to reconstitute the committee so it can continue its study of the issue.

"I think we owe it to the families to do a proper piece of work," said Liberal aboriginal affairs critic Carolyn Bennett. "There are substantial concerns that haven't been even remotely explored yet."

Bennett introduced the motion in February that led to the committee's establishment, and she is a vice-chair. She wrote to Valcourt on Aug. 22 urging the government to reconstitute the committee in the new session with the exact same mandate. She said she hasn't received a response, but believes the committee will be reconstituted.

"I think that the government knows it's got to do something on this file, and even though it's not what we had hoped for in a national public inquiry, I think that they will agree to reconstitute the committee," she said.

The government says it is deeply concerned by the high number of missing and murdered aboriginal women, but has stopped short of calling for a national inquiry. Instead, it says it has taken practical steps to address the issue, including the a family violence prevention program for on-reserve residents, community safety plans and victim services for Aboriginal Peoples.

It also touts new legislation such as the Matrimonial Real Property Act, which it says provides more equitable protection for aboriginal women on reserves.

Even if the committee does return, opposition members are expressing concern that it would be held to its original February reporting deadline. Depending on how late in October Parliament returns, that could leave little time to produce a report of substance.

Bennett has also asked the government to extend the reporting deadline to account for days lost due to prorogation.

In February, Assembly of First Nations National Chief Shawn Atleo greeted the committee as a welcome step forward. On Friday, an AFN spokesperson said its work should continue.

The AFN continues to call for a national public inquiry into the matter, and advocate for a national action plan to stop violence against indigenous women and girls. Earlier this summer, provincial and territorial premiers threw their support behind calls for a national inquiry.

NDP Aboriginal Affairs critic Jean Crowder also said the committee should continue its work. "It does give us an opportunity to continue to have a lens on it, and to continue to pressure the Conservatives to take some action," she said.

However, she and Bennett both expressed concerns about the direction the committee has taken. It has heard from mostly government or organizational witnesses so far, rather than hearing perspectives from families and communities. That's the work they are hoping to do this fall.

"Part of the challenge has been is that we didn't have a clear sense of what the Conservatives were willing to commit to," Crowder said. "We didn't have a clear statement of intent for the committee. Then we didn't have a work plan. "That's not a very effective way to operate."

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'Big year' for First Nations films at TIFF: Aboriginal presence at festival a growing trend, say native filmmakers

[CBC News](#)

Sep 2, 2013 3:05 PM ET



Jeff Barnaby, left, will be one of several aboriginal filmmakers screening films at this year's Toronto Film festival. He will be debuting his feature Rhymes for Young Ghouls, which stars Kawennahere Devery Jacobs, right. (Galit Rodan/Canadian Press)

Jeff Barnaby caught the filmmaking bug back in the early 1980s, when acclaimed aboriginal documentary director Alanis Obomsawin fixed her lens on a controversial Quebec police raid over salmon fishing rights on his Mi'gmaq reserve in Listuguj, Que.

"Alanis is the reason that I'm a filmmaker," the 37-year-old said in a recent interview. "I think her doing a kind of politically charged film (*Incident at Restigouche*) about my reserve really kicked off my film career in my brain."

Barnaby will get to share the spotlight with his 81-year-old movie-making icon when the two screen their features at the Toronto International Film Festival.

On Sept. 9, Barnaby will unveil the world premiere of his debut feature, *Rhymes for Young Ghouls*, which he wrote and directed. The irreverent drama is set against the

backdrop of residential schools in the 1970s as it follows an aboriginal teen (Kawennahere Devery Jacobs) who exacts revenge on a sadistic Indian Agent.

Meanwhile, Obomsawin's doc, *Hi-Ho Mistahey!*, will make its world premiere this Saturday with a look at the plight of the Attawapiskat First Nation in northern Ontario and the lack of funding for the education of children in First Nations communities.

Film an important presence on native reserves

Between those two features and the Peter Stebbings-directed drama *Empire of Dirt*, which debuts at the fest on Friday, "it turned out to be a really big year for First Nations films," says Canadian features programmer Agata Smoluch Del Sorbo.

Barnaby predicts the trend will continue.

"I think there's a huge fascination with film on any native reserve, because there's so little to do there, and nine times out of 10 what you're doing is kind of occupying your time going to the movies or playing video games," he said. "So, I think the medium really has a presence in native reserves, particularly because there are so many films out there with native people in them.

"So, I think you're going to start seeing a bit more native filmmakers coming out of the woodwork."

Obomsawin agrees.

"I think more and more, a lot of people and a lot of young people are into this business and there's a lot of interest, and more and more professional people are becoming professional filmmakers," she said in a telephone interview. "So, it's very encouraging."

Departure from 'hyper-masculine' stories

Barnaby said he embarked on *Rhymes for Young Ghouls* because he wanted to deviate from the "hyper-masculine" stories he's tackled in the past with his three short films, which include the Genie-nominated *File Under Miscellaneous*.

Using the "strong, hard-headed" women in his life as inspiration, he placed his heroine "in a place and time where it wasn't very popular to be a woman or to be native."

Fifteen-year-old Aila (Jacobs) lives on the Red Crow Mi'gMaq reservation and helps her uncle run the drug business abandoned by her father when he went to jail.

Aila's pot dealings have made her enough money to pay corrupt Indian Agent Popper (Mark Antony Krupa) her "truancy tax" so she can avoid attending residential school. But her fate changes when her money is stolen and her dad (Glen Gould) gets out of jail.

Barnaby, who is also an author and artist, shot the film in Montreal last fall and set the story from 1969 to 1976 because "that's when you start seeing the collapse of the residential school system."

The subject matter is still topical "because families that experienced the aftermath of what happened there are still being directly affected," he added.

Barnaby should know — his grandmother was in a residential school, as was one of his cast members.

Not a political film

Jacobs, who's a Native American Mohawk, also has family members who went to residential school.

The 20-year-old said when she read the script, she "knew it was going to be something that was a game-changer that most Canadians wouldn't be expecting."

"I think a lot of people who go to see the film are going to be shocked by it."

But despite the shocking elements, Barnaby insisted it's not a political film.

"I think the film is political insofar that it has natives in it, but it's not something I deliberately set out to do," he said. "There is no pulpit-dumping, once-we-were-warriors speeches or anything like that. It's just a story that just so happens to have a little bit of political ideology and edge to it. But by and large, it's a story first, a very cinematic story, borderline exploitation film."

"I think everybody's going to kind of get blown away by it, to be honest. I don't think they're going to realize what they're sitting down to see."

Perhaps one of the most surprising elements for audiences will be the humour that's sprinkled throughout the characters' trying circumstances.

"I think one thing that doesn't come across in a lot of native films is this idea that the native people as a whole have an insane sense of humour," said Barnaby. "So, there are quite a lot of things in there that are inappropriately funny and shouldn't be laughed at, but we'll laugh at them because, you know, we're native."

"That's how you cope with things," said Jacobs. "You laugh at inappropriate things and you just make light of it."

Undoing damage of past cinema

Obomsawin called Barnaby a "very special" and talented filmmaker who brings different ideas to the big screen.

"He has stories sometimes that are difficult to look at, but I think it's very exciting to see that he's managed to do what he's done so far," she said.

Barnaby said he hopes his film will have the same impact Obomsawin's doc did on him when he was young.

"In that there will be some young kid out there watching TMN (The Movie Network) one day and then see my movie and say that they can do that and make a difference to some other kid 20 years from now.

"I think in a really crazy way, native films are undoing a lot of the damage that the films that came before did, in giving native people an identity onscreen."

The Toronto film fest runs Sept. 5 to 15.

Youth want action on Thunder Bay Aboriginal Strategy: Thunder Bay sees rise in First Nations youth moving from reserves into the city

[CBC News](#)

Sep 3, 2013 12:11 PM ET



Young people gather in the south core to discuss the city's Aboriginal Liaison Strategy. Pictured from left to right are Candace Ferguson, Lucille Atlookan, Isaac Kakegamic, Trent Campeau, Jonathan Campeau and Carly Longpeter-Esquega. (Melanie Ferrier/CBC)

Thunder Bay is looking to revamp its Aboriginal Liaison Strategy and it's asking the public what's

worked — along with what hasn't.

Starting the conversation will be a challenge, however, said liaison Ann Magiskan.

"Living in Thunder Bay and being raised here for most of my life, what I've noticed over time is there's no community conversations that happen," she said. "People don't take the time just to learn a little bit about each other."

The current Aboriginal Liaison Strategy was put in place in 2010 and will be up for renewal in 2014. The city wants the public to comment on the strategy before it is renewed, so that they can tweak it accordingly. A two-day focus group meeting is in the works.

Take hate crimes more seriously

Some First Nations youth say they would rather see more direct action, instead of more talk.

"So, basically, you're just talking? Yes. Take action. That's all I have to say," said Lucille Atlookan, who has lived in Thunder Bay for four years.

She said her experiences living in the city have been tough.

"When I'm walking around — say I'm going shopping — people that work there all think I steal and ... sometimes, people throw stuff out of their vehicles like eggs [and] garbage."

Atlookan said she wants the city to take hate crimes more seriously.

As the number of First Nations youth continues to grow in the city, Thunder Bay needs to revamp its strategy, Magiskan added.

"Our community is not static. It's continually evolving."

Magiskan noted city policies should reflect the current face of Thunder Bay's aboriginal community. She said there are more aboriginal people living in the city than there was three years ago — and many of these aboriginal people are youth, as the median age is about 26.

Health and education are two of the main reasons that First Nations people move to the city.

Fewer aboriginal people on city's payroll: 7.6 per cent in 2012, stats show

[The StarPhoenix](#)

September 4, 2013

Phil Tank

The City of Saskatoon is making progress but continues to fall short of its workforce goals of more women, aboriginals and disabled people.

The percentage of aboriginal people employed by the city in 2012 was 7.6 per cent, down from 2011 but higher than the 5.9 per cent recorded in 2008. The Saskatchewan Human Rights Commission (SHRC) goal for aboriginal representation is 13.1 per cent, based on provincial statistics.

A report presented to the city's executive committee on Tuesday pointed out that Saskatoon's aboriginal population was 9.6 per cent in 2011.

"The city outside of City Hall is changing dramatically," Coun. Charlie Clark said. "One of the concerning points is the downward trend in aboriginal numbers."

The number of visible minorities employed by the city continues to rise steadily, climbing to 6.9 per cent in 2012 from four per cent in 2008. The 2012 number is above the SHRC goal of 6.6 per cent.

Women made up 39.1 per cent of the city's workforce of 3,248 in 2012, slightly more than in 2008 but still lingering below the SHRC mark of 47 per cent for women in under-represented professions. The number of women in the occupational groups of apprentice (13.8 per cent), labour (22.8) and managerial (30.7) all increased in 2012.

Women made up 91.7 per cent of the city's clerical workforce last year.

Half of the city's 10 senior managers are women, as are 29.1 per cent of middle managers. Of the entire managerial workforce, 1.1 per cent are aboriginal (a total of two people), 1.1 per cent are disabled (two) and 2.3 per cent are visible minorities (four).

Employees with a disability accounted for 3.8 per cent of city workers, up from 2.9 per cent in 2008 but well below the SHRC benchmark of 9.7 per cent.

The city was one of 55 employers recognized as Canada's Best Diversity Employers for 2013 by BMO Financial Group. The city is also an equity partner with the SHRC.

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Manitoba nation signs historic self-government agreement

[Wawatay News](#)

September 4, 2013

The Government of Canada, the Government of Manitoba and Sioux Valley Dakota Nation signed the first-ever self-government agreements last week.

Once in effect, the agreements remove Sioux Valley Dakota Nation from under portions of the Indian Act by providing them with greater control over decisions related to economic development, land management, education, housing and water, among other important issues, and by providing the mechanisms for good governance.

Bernard Valcourt, Minister of Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development; Chief Vincent Tacan of Sioux Valley Dakota Nation; the Honourable Eric Robinson, Minister of Aboriginal and Northern Affairs for Manitoba; and First Nation community members were at a special ceremony to celebrate the historic achievement last week.

"The Agreements reflect the collaboration of all parties over 20 years," said Tacan. "We begin to lift impediments of the Indian Act and move to build a self-reliant, healthy and prosperous Dakota Nation. Sioux Valley Dakota Nation looks to a continuing spirit of government co-operation by Canada and Manitoba."

"I believe these agreements will ensure that Sioux Valley Dakota Nation has the ability to provide increased economic opportunities for future generations, while continuing to honour their traditions and culture," said Robinson. "Together, through our excellent working relationship that has been developed with Sioux Valley Dakota Nation, these agreements can serve as a model for self-government for other First Nations in Manitoba."

The self-government agreements signed will give Sioux Valley Dakota Nation authority to make new laws affecting its community in over 50 subject areas, including governance, economic and social development, education, housing and more. Governance agreements will be harmonized with existing federal and provincial laws within the Canadian constitutional framework.

Confronting the past, looking to the future

[UBC News](#)

September 4, 2013

Corey Allen



Erica Baker is the coordinator for a student-directed seminar on reconciliation. Photo: Don Erhardt.

A new seminar on the effects of Canada's residential schools gives students a chance to contribute to something bigger than themselves

Talking about Canada's past with Indian residential schools – and how to move forward – can be a sensitive subject, but one Erica Baker refuses to shy away from.

The UBC student is the course coordinator for a [student-directed seminar on reconciliation](#), a first for the First Nations Studies program.

"As a non-Indigenous person in First Nations studies, I've always been interested in figuring out what my place is and what my role is as an ally," says Baker.

The course, *The Politics of Indigenous-Settler Reconciliation in Canada*, starts in September and will see students lead discussions on the topic. The course is open to students from any discipline. A student at UBC is allowed to take one student-directed seminar during their four-year degree.

Learning from history

The current reconciliation movement stems largely from Canada's Indian residential school system that forced thousands of First Nations children from their homes and placed them in strict boarding schools where many were physically and sexually abused. Some were also used as test subjects in research experiments.

According to Baker, who is entering her final year at UBC, the course is a chance for students to understand and contribute to something bigger than themselves.

"As a non-Indigenous person in First Nations studies, I've always been interested in figuring out what my place is and what my role is as an ally." -Erica Baker.

Those enrolled in the course will conduct research for [Indigenous Foundations](#), a website providing information and resources to the UBC community and the public on Aboriginal-related issues.

"Indigenous people are often still seen through a lens of deficiency or lack rather than being seen as having a really significant role to play in major issues of concern, such as climate change, governance, economic and environmental justice," says Daniel Justice, associate professor of First Nations Studies and English and the seminar's faculty sponsor.

A day of reconciliation

This fall, The Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada is hosting the last of its National Events in Vancouver from September 16 to 21. The group collects testimonies from residential school survivors. UBC is suspending classes on its Vancouver campus on Sept. 18 to encourage the campus community to participate.

"I hope people utilize what the day presents," Baker says. "It's a significant event in our lived history and an important opportunity to be a witness and actively engage with what's happening."

A part of the course's requirements is having students attend three events in the city, which could include the National Event. Justice says this will allow for students to gain a more sophisticated understanding of reconciliation as a concept, offering a glimpse of what efforts towards reconciliation look like on the ground.

For Baker, mending the relationship between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal communities in Canada is not the responsibility of any single group.

"It takes non-Indigenous and Indigenous people to work together to create a shared practice of decolonization that leads to long-term change, to move towards a future that fosters meaningful co-existence."

To learn more about why UBC has suspended classes on Sept. 18, click [here](#).

CTF calls for cost breakdowns of Hydro negotiations with First Nations

[Winnipeg Free Press](#)

September 4, 2013

Larry Kusch



Colin Craig (KEN GIGLIOTTI / WINNIPEG FREE PRESS ARCHIVES)

Close to \$75,000 was spent on a signing ceremony involving Manitoba Hydro and Tataskweyak Cree Nation upon conclusion of a deal to partner in the development of the proposed Keeyask Dam, according to documents obtained by the Canadian Taxpayers Federation.

As well, lawyers and consultants billed the First Nation more than \$250 per hour to aid it with its negotiations with Hydro. And when Hydro balked at paying more than \$250, the band passed a resolution covering the rest, with amounts in the tens of thousands of dollars to several firms.

Colin Craig, Prairie Director of the CTF, said the information, received as a result of freedom of information (FIPPA) requests, highlights the need for full disclosure of the details of costs of negotiating partnership deals with Aboriginal groups in the construction of the Wuskwatim, Keeyask and Conawapa dams as well as a new hydro transmission line. Of the four projects, only Wuskwatim has been built; the others are in various stages of planning or regulatory approval.

Previously, Manitoba Hydro has revealed that the costs of these negotiations has totalled \$224 million, but it has not provided detailed breakdowns of the costs.

Craig said the latest tidbits of information the CTF recently received are troubling.

He said the \$74,757 spent on the Keeyask signing is "a huge, huge amount of money" given "there are serious poverty concerns in that community (Tataskweyak)."

More troubling, Craig said, are the revelations about how much consultants and lawyers were billing — "astronomical amounts" well over \$250 per hour.

"It confirms what we've been saying all along that there's a whole industry of consultants and lawyers that are just milking the system and making million and millions of dollars on all these negotiation costs," Craig said.

He demanded that the Selinger government investigate the matter and direct the Crown corporation to reveal cost details of its negotiations with First Nations. And he urged the public to request that the provincial auditor general investigate the matter.

Ottawa's research on trafficking of aboriginal women panned

[CBC News](#)

05 September 2013 13:31

A Canadian government initiative to research family involvement in the trafficking of aboriginal women and girls has prompted accusations the government is blaming the victims.

Public Safety Canada recently issued a request for proposals for research into the trafficking of aboriginal women and girls for sexual exploitation, with a specific focus on the possible involvement of relatives and criminal gangs.

But some in the aboriginal community say they find the premise of the research offensive, accusing the federal Conservative government of seeking ways to blame the families of the women who are victimized.

"I was just, like, flabbergasted. Angry, frustrated that this is the way they look at it," said Candy Volk, whose 18-year-old niece, Hillary Wilson, was found dead in a field near Winnipeg in 2009.

"This is what Harper gives us: let's blame the victim, let's not look at the issue of the missing and murdered women ... we have to blame someone."

According to Public Safety Canada's request for proposals, the research project will focus in part on "describing the extent and situations in which family members are involved in victimizing their relatives."

The research will also examine "the mechanisms by which human trafficking and domestic violence are related to one another, particularly in the context of family trafficking" and look at "how gangs and criminal organizations are involved in trafficking."

Bids for the project were accepted until Wednesday afternoon.

"It's very cleverly designed to bring about results that will be blaming First Nations for murdered and missing and traded indigenous women," said Pam Palmater, chair of the Centre for Indigenous Governance at Ryerson University in Toronto.

In a statement, a federal government spokesperson told CBC News that previous research has indicated that family members are sometimes involved in the trafficking of aboriginal women and girls.

Winnipeg-area Conservative MP Joy Smith said the research would serve as a starting point, as victims of trafficking would share their experiences, and focusing on family connections could reveal other root causes of human trafficking.

"If a family member has an addiction — let's say it's a mom or a dad — that's when you see the family connection to human trafficking," Smith said.

But Palmater said there are a number of systemic reasons why aboriginal women and girls are more vulnerable to sexual exploitation, including poverty.

"The purposeful chronic underfunding they have in communities that force people to live 20 to a home [with] not enough food to eat ... creates situations of hopelessness which results in all of these situations," she said.

Reconciliation Week Envisions 'New Way Forward': Series of events around Truth and Reconciliation Commission aims to foster healing, hope for a better future

[TheTyee](#)

September 5, 2013

David P. Ball



Shelley Joseph, community engagement lead for Reconciliation Canada, took part in the Women's Memorial March in February. Photo by David P. Ball.

Organizers of Canada's first "Walk for Reconciliation" hope to see some 50,000 people on Vancouver's streets on Sept. 22, charting a "new way forward," as the event's slogan urges, for Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people.

That might seem huge, but in Australia similar marches attract millions every year and have blossomed across a country grappling with its own colonial abuses.

In Vancouver, the walk is the culmination of [Reconciliation Week](#), a series of events coinciding with the B.C. national hearings of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC), which is traveling the country collecting thousands of painful testimonies about Indian Residential School abuses.

"It is symbolic of our intent to walk together, to find a new way forward," said Chief Robert Joseph, Hereditary Chief of the Gwawaenuk First Nation and founder of Reconciliation Canada. "If 50,000 people walked together, it would send a strong message to other Canadians and Aboriginal people too – that some Canadians do care and desire reconciliation. That's a powerful message.

"The idea is simply for us to invite Canadians who have always wondered how they could get engaged. In all our travels we've discovered that so many non-Aboriginal people care, but they've never known quite what to do, or have never been invited. This whole week of reconciliation is an invitation to them."

A shared responsibility

Though long-simmering, injustices faced by Indigenous people in Canada exploded in the media late last year with the [Idle No More](#) movement, which rallied against a range of federal omnibus bills as well as deplorable conditions in many First Nations communities.

More recently, many Canadians expressed shock at revelations that thousands of children in residential schools were unknowingly subjected to medical, scientific and [nutritional experiments](#); a long-held, unacknowledged fact amongst many survivors that added to the trauma of widespread sexual and physical abuse. An estimated 150,000 children were taken from their families and placed in the schools from the 1870s until the last one closed in 1996.

"We have to have some shared responsibility about the past and also look at ways we can move forward together," said Stewart Anderson, manager of Aboriginal banking at [VanCity Savings Credit Union](#), a partner in Reconciliation Canada's work. "Because it's based on relationships, dialogue, and mutual respect, it's a pretty simple approach.

"It creates a safe place for people to get together and talk, to learn about their collective histories and the impact of those histories on where we are now."

Anderson told The Tyee that VanCity supports the organization's work year-round as part of its drive to boost economic independence for First Nations people, and to foster "just and sustainable" communities. For him, the week of events in Vancouver is just a symbol of a larger shift that's needed.

"Communities that have been disinvested and marginalized are now working to build their capacity, sovereignty over their resources, and the ability to make decisions over their lands that they haven't had in a long time," he said. "If we all come from a place of mutual respect and understanding, the shift is going to be easier to take on."

Like the prominent credit union, the City of Vancouver has also [endorsed](#) Reconciliation Week and is encouraging residents to get involved. And though some have expressed caution about the flurry of sudden optimism for a human rights crisis centuries in the making -- and even skepticism over the role and sincerity of large institutional sponsors -- Chief Joseph said the point is not to ignore the past, but to build a better future.



A class in penmanship at the Red Deer Indian Industrial School, Red Deer, Alberta, ca. 1914 or 1919. Source: United Church of Canada archives.

"I've seen the destruction and devastation left by colonialism on a race of people," Joseph said, himself a survivor of a residential school. "Those of us who grew up in those times were broken; it led to resentment, hostility, anger, and being left out."

Reconciliation Week events

Sept. 16, 2013: Lighting the Fire of Reconciliation

A sacred fire will be lit to symbolize the commencement of Reconciliation Week.

Sept. 17 2013: All Nations Canoe Gathering

Vanier Park to Science World. People-powered crafts will join traditional canoes in a welcome ceremony to Coast Salish lands. Learn more [here](#).

Sept. 18-21, 2013: Truth and Reconciliation Commission's BC National Event

Pacific National Exhibition. Come share & learn the truths about Indian Residential Schools. This event is a formal part of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's statement gathering process, but is also welcoming of the public with many opportunities to learn, bear witness, and even offer your own expressions of reconciliation. Visit the [TRC website](#).

Sept. 22, 2013: Walk for Reconciliation & A New Way Forward

Queen Elizabeth Plaza (Georgia at Hamilton) to South side of False Creek (Quebec at Terminal). Bringing Canada's many cultures to walk a path together in a shared commitment to reconciliation. [Register for the walk](#).

"I slowly began to recognize that if we're ever to resolve this grave issue, we have to deal with it together. It doesn't matter how much money is paid to survivors or programs provided to them; if we don't reconcile in the long term, we'll continue to be angry, resentful and separated."

Healing the anger

For critics of Canada's reconciliation process, what some deem "negative emotions" -- like rage, resentment or contempt -- may in fact not be all that negative after all, but important and normal responses to ongoing injustices.

"They're seen as holding us back, as creating a kind of debilitating pain which we can't escape... as leading to all kinds of issues such as alcoholism [and] suicide," explained Glen Coulthard, a professor of political science and First Nations studies at the University of British Columbia. "In the context of oppression and colonialism, the existence of emotions like anger and resentment are telling us that something is wrong."

"To be resentful of something is to have indignation at being treated unfairly. When that emotion expresses itself as a politicized form of anger, we ought not try to overcome that prematurely -- but channel it in a direction that will target the source of that oppression or wrongdoing."

Coulthard has written extensively about colonialism and what he calls the "politics of resentment." He told The Tyee that ideas like "reconciliation" and "forgiveness" might offer important solace or healing to some people, but without making concrete political demands or commitments, there likely won't be lasting

transformation – instead, he said, the process may just be "a Bandaid that never actually heals the wound."

"For survivors of residential schools, some of them will find comfort in this, and see it as a genuine move towards something better -- ideally, better treatment, a just relationship, and what have you," he said. "Reconciliation needs to be engaged, and not just uncritically taken at face value."

"Settler colonialism is a current phenomenon, not just a historical one... Unless there's a redistribution of lands that were illegally appropriated, a reinstitution of political authority that was taken away, it won't amount to the type of change that we need."

Joseph acknowledged the concerns, adding that he has been confronting Canada's injustices since the closure of the last residential school, only 17 years ago. Reconciliation Week, he said, is about slowly laying future healing foundations, and certainly not forgetting about the injustices.

"All those questions you've asked are questions many people ask," Joseph said. "But nothing will change unless we change our own mindset, who we are, and where we want to go in the future. Otherwise, there's a danger we might just languish in resentment, anger and darkness."

"Over time, it's going to pave a new way forward. That's the emphasis, not to forget about the sad and tragic history of residential schools. We'll always, for a long time, continue to struggle for equality and justice, and move away from the harm... We have to begin with courage [and] work on it every day, step by step. It's better than staying where we are: broken."

What Would I Be Without You?

Joseph said the biggest inspirations behind his decades of reconciliation work are leaders like Martin Luther King, Jr. ("We never had a dream growing up," Joseph mused, "but no matter what's happened to us, we can begin to dream about better things") and his grandmother in Kingcome Inlet, who always told him, "My precious one, what would I be without you?"

He didn't understand what it meant at the time, but after surviving his own residential school hell and ensuing years of alcoholism, Joseph came to realize that recognizing the dignity and worth of all people is essential to treating people better as a society.

"As Canadians, we could all embrace that mantra: 'What would I be without you?'" he said.

Reconciliation Week starts off at 8 a.m. on Sept. 16 with the lighting of a "fire of reconciliation" at Ambleside Beach in West Vancouver, on Squamish nation lands. The events also include an All Nations Canoe Gathering on Sept. 17 by Science World. The Walk for Reconciliation starts on Aug. 22, and will march 4 km from Queen Elizabeth Plaza (Georgia St. and Hamilton St.) to Creekside Park.

State of aboriginal schools laid bare in film 'Hi-Ho Mistahey!'

[Rabble](#)

September 5, 2013

June Chua



Shannen Koostachin would look federal ministers in the eye and say, "That's not good enough," when they made promises to build a new school in her Cree community of Attawapiskat, by the shores of James Bay. She wasn't even old enough to drive a car when she faced down the politicians.

Shannen was only 13 in 2008 when she led a [movement for "safe and comfy" schools](#) for First Nations children. Tragically, two years later, she died in a car accident May 31, 2010 while attending an off-reserve school.

What sparked her resolve was a remark in 2007 by a federal minister who said that construction of a new school in her community was just not a priority. Filled with a supernatural sense of self and pluck, she gathered her resolve to get that school built.

"You always have to fight [Aboriginal Affairs] if you want to get things done," says Alanis Obomsawin, the acclaimed First Nations documentary filmmaker whose previous films include *Kanehsatake: 270 Years of Resistance* (1993), *Richard Cardinal: Cry from the Diary of a Métis Child* (1986) and *Incident at Restigouche* (1984).

Obomsawin brings Shannen's story to life with the [NFB documentary *Hi-Ho Mistahey!*](#), which premieres at this year's Toronto International Film Festival.

Shannen turned to the children -- an army of children -- to take up the cause. The kids in the community had been getting sick (rashes, breathing problems, etc.) for years in their old school building. A diesel oil leak some 20 years earlier had contaminated the grounds. In 2000, they got a set of portables -- cramped, freezing

spaces. And since that year, minister after minister would pledge to build a new school.

"Everything surprised me when I got there," said [Obomsawin, who has made 40 films since 1971](#), is an officer of the Order of Canada, holder of a couple of Governor General's awards, and was named to the Canadian Film and Television Hall of Fame in 2010.

"The mobiles are rundown and overcrowded. They were lacking so many things. It's unjust. Those children have a right to a proper education."

Education money siphoned off

[As the film traces Shannen's trajectory and life](#) it also illuminates the dark reality of funding for native schools. The money -- supposedly earmarked for education -- held at Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development, is often siphoned off for other matters (the film mentions the department having to pay lawyers or fund aid efforts to communities that have flooded or experienced some sort of natural disaster).

Funds provided for education in Attawapiskat amount to \$8,000/pupil. Compare that to \$15,000/pupil in Timmins, Ont.

Obomsawin says when she heard about Shannen's death (the filmmaker had never met the teenager before), she decided to drop in on Attawapiskat, packing a tape recorder.

"The minute I entered the village, I could feel the sadness," notes the director. "I felt discouraged but then... I decided to go to every classroom and meet the children. I fell in love with the children!"



*Children outside mobile school.
Credit: NFB*

At that moment, Obomsawin decided to return with a film crew. And over a period of three years, she made the documentary.

The documentary is a tribute to Shannen. Interviews with her

family and friends paint an individual with enormous gifts of intelligence, compassion and courage. As her father Andrew repeats several times: "She was a special child."

The snippets of footage with Shannen are riveting.

In one scene, with eloquence and quiet despair, she describes to an audience how it feels to have to go to school thousands of kilometres from home in order to get a better education. And with equal emotion, she's out stumping on a podium or on Parliament hill shaming the politicians. It's the kind of tenacity that gets results.

Just prior to her death, in 2009, the government came through with its promises and the new school is set to open in September 2014.

Shannen's Dream Motion passed

After Shannen's death, a group of students took up her cause and decided to keep pressing for better schools for all First Nations children. Their cause, [Shannen's Dream, went national](#) and culminated in two major events: a presentation in Geneva to the United Nations about the issue and most crucially, the passing -- unanimously by all MPs -- of the Shannen's Dream Motion in February 2012 recognizing the right of First Nations children to be educated in "safe and comfy" schools.

The ending builds to an emotional crescendo when Shannen's father arrives in Ottawa in February 2012, making a speech after the passing of the motion in the same Parliamentary room where his daughter had spoken four years earlier.

Obomsawin screened the film for Shannen's parents before its final cut.

"They cried a lot through it," says the director, who admits to being very nervous about the screening, knowing how difficult it might be. "After it was done, they hugged me and said 'it's an honour for Shannen and we're happy the film will be out there.'"



Shannen Koostachin dancing. Credit: NFB

Shannen's legacy lives in all those children in Attawapiskat and elsewhere. As her father stated: "A true leader doesn't create followers. A true leader creates other leaders."

Obomsawin says the victory belongs to the kids.

"Those children are like soldiers."

Catch the documentary

Hi-Ho Mistahey! screens at the [Toronto International Film Festival](#):

Sept. 7, 4:30 p.m. at the TIFF Bell Lightbox (Shannen's parents, Obomsawin will be in attendance)

Sept. 9, 2 p.m. at Jackman Hall -- Art Gallery of Ontario

Sept. 14, 6 p.m. at Jackman Hall

Plans are in the works for it to be broadcast on TV sometime in the future and livestreamed on the NFB website. For those in Toronto, the film will also run again at the Lightbox Nov 1 to 7.

By the way, the title *Hi-Ho Mistahey!* has its roots in Shannen's family. Her parents would often say to their children, when they were toddlers, "I love you mistahey" (translates to "forever") but the kids couldn't pronounce "I love you" and instead, would respond, "Hi-ho mistahey!"